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· EDITH ·

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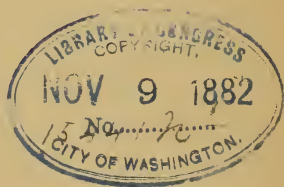
"She stands alone by the water,
Her playmates far across,
With her apron rich in woodland trove,
Fresh buds, and freshened moss."

EDITH.

A POEM IN FOUR PARTS.

BY

LAVINIA P. YEATMAN.



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DEDICATION.

TO THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS.

IN dedicating to you this simple metrical work, in this our Bi-Centennial year, I do so with feelings of deep anxiety.

In that refinement of thought which has ever been a distinguishing feature among our earnest friends, a love for the beautiful and true is ever present.

The beautiful sometimes may lead away from simplicity, and in our deep love for the truth we have feared to offer a free expansion to anything that might unfold into imaginative work.

Yet in this age, when "the poets of the world" have touched almost every chord of truthful earnestness with a beauty which commands our unity of feeling, we have not failed to render them our sympathy and admiration.

Of "Edith" I will say its chief qualities are its truth, and its adherence to "the vital principles of our Society." The quiet trouble of the child, her prayers, and their conclusion, are no imaginary idea, but were the real, life experience of one whose whole after-life was strengthened by it, and I have felt it to be a duty to throw it into this form, that "an olden lesson of faith" might be again recalled among us.

THE AUTHOR.

EDITH.

PART FIRST.

EVER thy far thought fills thy land, O Penn !

The "blue skies" tell us thy glad, wondering joy ;
Clear spring thy "plentiful waters ;" glade and glen,

Rich-cultured, breathe "thy peace;" the "south winds" coy
O'er broad, brave cities float ; while high and deep

Thy struggles for the holier truth men see,
And steadfast as thy soul's superior sweep

Hold they thy gifts, Freedom, Equality ;

Thy grandeur hath outlived all calumny ;

And o'er thy people broods the prophecy
Of thy sad spirit born,—“ If Friends will keep

To God in Justice, Mercy, Truth innate,
Their foes will be their footstool ; if these sleep,

Their heirs, and mine too, will be desolate ;”

Grave words, which figure man's and type a nation's fate.

Penn's Letter, 1682.

It was little Edith Aubrey
Sitting low upon her stool,
With books, and dolls, and wealth of lore
Around her, playing school ;
Scarce heeding word or low reply,
As passed the quiet converse nigh,
Till thus, by childish instinct led,
She taught the Golden Rule.

By a window, gravely thoughtful,
Anna sat, her busy hand
Over boyish raiment gliding,
Renovating break and band,
With that shrewd, and apt precision,
Mothers haply may command.

And nigh, with easy, lounging air,
In cushioned comfort resting,
With slippered feet on foot-rest rare,
(Rights national investing),
Sat Morris, earnestly the while
The *Daily News* digesting.

Hushed lay the pleasant room, and bright,
No draperies dim revealing

The smile of that pale winter day ;
But backward thrown, all golden gay
The sun, with mild, familiar play,
Breaking through cloud-ranks far away,
Came, mellowing floor and ceiling,
With prying glance defining close
Grave lines, and dainty feeling ;

Where warm, and fresh the carpet threw
Its neat design, in keeping,
In neutral tint, and lifting leaf,
With the calm hush upcreeping,
While flashed the cheerful fire aglow,
Where Tabbie, with her breast of snow
Upturned, lay cosy sleeping.

Where—neatly framed on soft, gray wall,
Enwreathed with tendrils slender
Of clematis, and forest-leaf
In autumn-tinted splendor,
He shadowed scenes whose old renown
Art-taste so loves to trace, and crown
With reverence wondering, tender,
The beautiful of classic art,—
That strange environment of heart

With the dread unknown,—grasping still
Through marbled form, through thought's high skill,
To symbolize the eternal will
Nor man nor Art may render.

Where—winningly to student eye
Ranged book-shelves, crowded over
With works whose sterling worth revealed
The mind-tone to the household sealed,
Traced he choice names from fancy's field ;
Whilst Penn and Barclay, Ellwood, Fox,
Quaint bound, yet solid as the rocks
The winds of Syria blew upon,
With tender care encircled shone,
Seemingly yet with mild concern
The minds of comrades to discern,
Who round in modern tone and dress,
Told thought's enlarged expansiveness.
Oh, long may Quaker heart revere
The honored names, the tenets clear,
Which stamped an age to virtue dear.

So glided on, with peep and flash,
The sun from form to cover,
Till close by Anna's work-stand staid
He paused, 'neath trifles overlaid,

Tracing on delicate leaf displayed
 “The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner”
(The charmed float of its misty power
Thrilling each nerve through the reader’s hour),
As it lay on the open, kindred page,
Where grand Isaiah’s lines engage
The faith which woke the prophet fire,
And brooded by the lone, weird sea,
Kindling the secret rapt desire
 Which guides the after-harmony.

Thought-freighted passed the still hour by,
 Each wrapt in their ideal,—
The silent charm conjecture weaves
 Whilst challenging the real
Oft throws from iron bars a song
Angels might stoop to bear along.

ANNA.

“The last page read? Then, Morris, comes
 The light task to review them,
My thoughts the while have studying ranged.”

MORRIS.

“Retrace thy thoughts; even though estranged
 They be, thou canst imbue them
With interest, Anna.”

ANNA.

“Thanks, my friend ;
Yet on thy cherished views might trend
Their tone, did I pursue them.

“Couched in such changeful, varying guise,
Thought comes, so quickly fading,
I can but catch its central truths ;
The added outlines aiding
And rounding up each point, I lose
With each successive shading.
And thus thy words of yesternight
Have been with me, and truly
As still I trace Art's noble gift
To purer heights the mind to lift,
I see the passionate human will
So regal, dominant, while still
Its heroism holds a thrill
Which charms one all unduly.
Darkly, I see this shadow fall,
Where the divine should rule in all
The efforts of man's life,—his call—
Well, stay thy ‘news,’ my thought may be
An atom on thy mind's broad sea,
Stemming some wave unruly.”

She spoke and smiled as, smiling, he,
With mock obedience bending,
Assumed an attitude to hear,
Then serious, as a light more clear
Came up, and filled the large dark eye,
She thus her point defending :

ANNA.

“ I’ve weighed my thought, and this must be
The *résumé* I proffer thee,—

He who uplifts our earth-bound lives

To the Christ-words truth its beauty,
Touching the delicate folds within
The holier Life, till self and sin
Lie hushed, as the rich communings stirred
By the unseen Love in the soul are heard,
He who so comprehends, but sees
The chord which binds the harmonies
In the grand advance of time, for him
The higher homage ne’er shall dim ;
Whilst wealth of Art, or wealth of thought,
If heedless or opposing brought,
Takes lower rank of duty.

“ Art needs the sweet Truth’s spoken strength ;
Not through her clouded niches

Should float this all-controlling reach
Of human passion, guiding speech,—
 World-lore but half enriches,—
But that grand hymn God gives the soul
 (Whose love-throb, richly thrilling
In intimate relation, all
 Creation's pulse, and filling
Our own life with communion touch,)
 Demands its true instilling,—
Demands that man shall comprehend,
 In meaning clear and true, that breath
So breathed in him when, Eden-born,
 He drank the wine of Life beneath
The covering of a joy so rare,—
 The primal blessing, 'All is good,'
 Filling (an essence understood)
The love-lit glory everywhere.

“ Our poet-heart dreams wistfully
 With an uncertain yearning ;
While intellect stamps all to-day
 With its bold, eager learning ;
And earth-love holds its idol, earth,
 So high, all higher spurning :
Yet each may read, must read, with eyes
 More clear, the truth, that He whose will

Moulds warmth and being, touching all
With sovereign beauty, yet will fill
His creature man with finest sense
Of spiritual intelligence,
Stamping his intellectual course
With higher power than reason's force,
And give to him the rapt delight
Of conscious intercourse, as when
The Hebrew prophets bent before
His mighty guiding presence then."

Half pausing as her earnest word
Touched a far thought, whose vivid glance
Turned back to meet the indistinct
Relations, resting in the trance
Of far-forgotten time, again,
True to her purposed will, her quiet views advance:

"Thy favorite poet take. His thought
Grandly his laurels all have bought ;
He makes the warm pulse spring again
With pride, with triumph, with disdain,
Yet still through all one rich refrain
Binds down to earth, the sensate wealth
Of image, tone, precludes that health

Whose sentient, near, perceptive line
Lifts, o'er our earth-loves, the divine ;
O'er manly quest, the holier right.
I cannot see why thought should be
E'er moulded by a bygone night ;
The principles of love and light
Within the soul, so clear and free,
Build far a broader plane to-day
Where rest the Christ-born purity,
And all of earth within us may
Bathe in that Life whose ripples still
Float, wave-like, upwards towards the pure
Perfection of the eternal will."

MORRIS.

"Why, Anna, my favorite well might stand
Dismayed, if from thy judging hand
Came forth the power to crown with bays
The triumph of his loftier lays.
But deemest thou that the poet's range
Of far-seen thought, of fancy's reach,
In soberer tints should interchange
With wisdom that the prophets teach?"

ANNA.

"True grandeur in an artist's thought
From simplest truth is clearest caught,

Moulding the imagined, all design
Takes color, tone, from truth inwrought,
For, born in light, she is divine.
Yes, Morris, from the poet's pen
Should glance the force of prophet ken,
For his high gift of artist dower
Takes from divinest life its power ;
If true to nature, still he draws
His life-tide from God's perfect laws.

"I take a deep delight in all
My poet friends, and hail the call
To art-life as a nobler road,
Where thought refined, refines the good ;
And eagerly I yearn to find

In each that winsome glory
Which fills the triune life in us,—

Our full Life with their story.
There are whose high uplift of song
Bears one in rapt delight along

Fresh, new, their wisdom hoary ;
There are who trail their plumes in earth,
So loosely shaming nobler birth,
Aping the Paphian's poor employ,
His honeyed charms pursuing ;

Ah ! minds of pure and delicate mould
Such false draughts oft are rueing.
I scorn the weakness that would hold
In this rich age the meagre gold
Which old Parnassus might enfold."

MORRIS.

"Ah ! Anna, with Anacreon's odes
Came in the high encrownal,
Where Art-life joined in warmest flush
The Bacchante's lush endownal ;
I doubt if judgment pure as thine
Can Cytherean spells untwine,
Or guide to-day the myrtle-vine's
Soft, witching, wide renownal ;
Truth, self-denying, hides her worth,
While trailing wings drop down to earth,
And, dust-encumbered, loose enfold
Rude sense of virtue as of old."

ANNA.

"Nay, if 'twere rude, then, Morris, all
Its wrongful influence might fall ;
But silvered, plausible, refined,
False beauty wins and warps the mind.
Take now this work, a favorite thine"

(She lifted from a table nigh
A book of rhyméd melody);
“Those reaches of sublimer thought,
So quaintly by its heroine taught,
Subside in tints Arcadian caught.
The self-poised, resolute design
Drops humbly bound at Love’s sweet shrine.
As though a woman’s best estate
But fits her for a cooing mate,
The high, full grandeur life should wear
Scarce recognized in resting there.
Pulsing the old barbaric throe,—
The same dark fate that Herod prest
To matchless Marianne’s breast,
Type of the world of long ago.
Ah! selfish love makes ne’er atone,
We tread the wine-press all alone;
Singly the pathway must be trod,
Bearing our records up to God.
And when I see young spirits bending
Over these thoughts, and Fancy lending
Her gilded plumes to crown it truth,
I mourn o’er poesy and youth.”

Lightly he laughed,—“Why, Anna, much
Have I enjoyed the author’s touch,

Bringing the grotesque and the true,
In exquisite proportions, through
The wildest whims chivalrous sense
E'er drew of glory's vain pretence.
So lightly glides the scenic roll,
The sequel but sustains the whole.
Nay, though to earth these plumes be prest,
I claim my poet grandest, best ;
Contented with the earth-seen real,
I leave untouched the far ideal."

Mirth laughed in Morris Aubrey's eye
Whilst waiting for the grave reply,
Which slow, and with a shade of pain,
Challenged his ready thought again.

ANNA.

"Thou shamest me with thy lightsome strain.
No published work but carries weight,
Controlful of another's fate ;
While reverencing the grandly true
We honor self, an honor due
To our high calling and to God.
Lifting our own sublimer real,
What is it but to live the ideal ?
This dim-seen, mythic, dread ideal,

Which is but Christ-truth, 'tis so odd
How man accepts the baser birth.

“What made a Bayard, Sidney, grand,
But this, the holding 'neath command
Each earth-drawn yearning? Lived they not
The very word that Jesus taught?
Nathless the gild of romance thought?
This glaze romantic, does it add
To manhood's worth? 'Tis but the quiver
Of self-love rippling through and through,
Like moon-smile on a sleeping river,
Where hides the whirlpool dim from view,
Keeping its records drear and sad.

“Yet holier gròws twin Life and Art,
And as the Christ-light fills the world
A delicate beauty, mild, intense,
Redeemed from many a dread pretence
That clouds the earlier Renaissance,
(Dread monkish horrors, dim defined,
To agonize the shuddering mind
As dark Murillo's gloomy art,
Chilling alike to brain and heart),
Floats down, and in her haunts lies curled.

A sweeter Christ-child lives and brings
To all, the blessedness of things.

“So read I calm and grave Lucile ;
And follow Browning’s musings,
And trace in grand Aurora Leigh
The future’s tone of choosing,
While through our nearer poet-tomes
The in-life’s fulness broader comes.”

MORRIS.

“These meet the present, Anna, these
Are modelled to the modern tone ;
The fire of ancient chivalry
Long lingering died at last, and we
Have coolly, calculating grown.
Our Sidneys still are passing rare,
The Luvois’ crowd us everywhere ;
Still twines the thread of human will
Its charmed tension, easier still
The path our rational powers make clear
Than the rapt wisdom of the seer.

- “Thy calm, cold Leigh hath winning grace,
Yet when, through years of waiting,
Her goal she gains, the sequel then
Comes in that goal elating,

Thus giving to nature honor due ;
The pulsings of the heart are true,
Though far our Princess stoops to sue
 The weakness she was rating.
Ah ! thought is power while reason sways
Her actual through the golden blaze
Wherein her truths are paraphrased."

Gently she answers,—

 " But the word
Which lightens reason stands preferred.
Morris, can thought, slow born, evolved
 Through hours of doubt and labor,
Be stronger help on life's tried path
 Than its more gifted neighbor?
The spirit light ? the spirit word ?
O'er all these rational senses heard,
 When knelt the Christ at Tabor ?

" My mother always said to me,—
 ' Follow the clear impression ;
That which brings peace to thy stilled soul
 Hold fast in thy possession ;
For Christ-love ever whispers thee
 The word of intercession.'

“ I read more clear each finished year
My childhood’s cherished warning,
And know the inward light is ne’er
Subject to thought’s adorning.
It guides the accomplished thought, and calms
With still small voice, its scorning.”

“ Well, Anna, list thee while I read
How life to-day is waking,
What germ lies ’neath this strange crusade
That bursts with sudden breaking?
This Temperance movement, born of Faith,
Through faith its converts making.”

He read the Western story told,
Where womanhood, with suffering bold,
Assumed to rule the hour,
Battling for husband, sire, and son
Against the wine-fiend’s malison.
Battling with vice, each dark retreat
She touched as Mercy’s paraclete,
With prayer of faith, till cold hearts beat
Filled with a strong, new power.

Pausing, he spoke,—

“ Anna, there seems

To be a strange wild power in this ;
What pity that the human mind
Must range so far amiss !
What good can come from nerves upwrought,
Through sheer excitement, to a height
Which in the calm rebound of thought
Must shame its actors? In my light,
The moral strength whose centred force
Of reason born is passion stilled,
Alone can stay the drunkard's course
Or maddened thirst,—in high resolve
Is God's best will fulfilled."

As when through summer tangles
Springs the light brook gladly on,
Its silvery-voicéd music
Taking daintier, dreamier tone,
Till the ear, attuned to listening,
Hath inattentive grown.

Comes the light breeze dashing forward,
Tossing wild the tuneful spray,
And we turn, with sudden startle,
At its changeful roundelay ;
So this last concluding sentence
Startled Edith at her play.

The voice that spoke was pained and sad,
The low tones falling clear,
With a half-doubting softness, sank
Upon the young child's ear ;
Their quiet pain just touched the point
Where pity blent with fear.

Lightly the doll resumed her place,
The book passed from her hand,
While with a quick observant grace
She turned towards her mother's face,
And with a keen eye scanned
How far the sympathetic chord
Of feeling met the thought and word.

ANNA.

“Alas ! we know not, Morris—all
Have not this gift of self-control ;
Calm reason might, yet seldom does,
Resist the tempting bowl.
Like a sick child should he be held
Who perils thus his soul.

“It may be that a good unseen
For the near future lies in this ;
Faith hath her perfect work ; to us
Her ways may seem amiss,

Yet, thrice refined, her gold is weighed
Even in a temperance crusade.

“I tell thee, not one prayer is lost :
Some lone inebriate feels its power,
Some shivering wife, some poor child crossed
In life's best hopes ; her only dower,
Perchance, a smile by angels given,
As faith's sweet prayer is heard in heaven.”

Silent sat Edith there,—her hand
Closed with a slow and quiet thrill,
As the quick blood in crimsoned flood
Passed upward, onward, till
It bathed the fair young cheek and brow
In its impetuous will.

Silent she sat,—all undefined
Crowded in close review
Shadows of things unseen, refined
By child-thought, ever vivid, true,
And sweeping o'er her eager mind
In pictures infinite and new.

Veiled by a terror indistinct
Rose suffering, want, and childhood's pain ;

She saw from little moaning lips
The needed succor turned again,
And in her heart a low, deep cry
Of anguish echoed its refrain.

Lightly the golden sunbeam fell
Around her as it quivering played,
Dancing in doubles, curled in rings,
Through the pines graceful spraylets made,
As restless in the rude west wind
The tall boughs by the casement swayed.

Oft had she pleasant converse held
In play-thought with the changeful shadow,
Peopling the creep of sheen and shade
With frolic forms of wood and meadow,
Who, deep in folk-lore's mythic rites,
Laughed back imagined child delights.

Now danced the rippling shades unseen ;
Her large dark eye, dilated, saw
One scene of secret pain,—but one
Had Edith's life ; its iron law,
Unknown to all, was hers alone,
And woke and mingled with her moan.

Her father's voice low answer gives,—

“It will not do, nay, Anna, nay;
Thy faith, so trustful, only lives
In hope unfounded, stern to-day,
Demands her truths undoubted, clear.
We may not pour in wisdom's ear
The theories of fancy's play.

“Man knows, yet glories in his shame;
Self-willed, defiant, Will he turn
With a fixed purpose from his ways
For prayers and tears? Nay, from the urn
Which holds their dust will come the cry,
‘These might, but would not.’ Man, perforce,
Can turn the torrent's giant course,
And all subdued, by wire and will,
Bring nature's occult forces still;
Yet, scorning conscience, love, or right,
This vice, once learned, ne'er yields its might.”

Now uprose Edith Aubrey
From her corner, from her play,
The dark-eyed child whose merry laugh
Made home's glad echoes gay,
The darling of the homestead hearth,
The welcomed bud of May.

She passed around her father's chair,
And, leaning by his side,
Her arm around his neck she threw,
And earnestly replied,—
“ Papa, was God's best will fulfilled
When Uncle Alan died ?

“ Oh ! don't thee know how hard he tried :
He tried all summer long ;
He would not go to any place
For fear he might do wrong.
Thee knows how much thee talked to him,
And helped him all along.

“ Oh, papa ! I can see him now,
How, when his friends would come
And coax, and coax him out with them,
He'd seem as he were dumb ;
He'd only say, ‘ Thanks, comrades, but
My duty lies at home.’

“ And mamma said that it was hard,
When all his friends were going,
To stay at home and study books,
And translate Virgil, knowing
That every one would ask for him
At picnic and at rowing.

“And he was always good, and then
When in the harvest weather
He ran the reaper, and I went,
We always were together ;
I brought him water from the spring,—
I did not mind it, either.

“He took it always with a smile,
And seemed as he were thinking ;
He’d say, ‘As Kirjath-Sepher’s gift
Comes this cool, pleasant drinking ;’
And he would look so sad sometimes,—
He seemed to fear his thinking.

“And then thee knows Maud Merrill came,
And coaxed him all the morning
To her reception. Oh ! he went ;
He had not any warning
They would have wine——”

MORRIS.

“Hush, Edith, child ;
Don’t talk so, love ; thy words are wild.”

EDITH.

“Papa, she bade him pledge with her,—
(I heard him say so after,)—

To pledge the bride a happy life
And wedding's blessings waft her.
She ruled him with her pleasant words,
She shamed him with her laughter ;
He told me, papa, all these words,
He told me of it after.

“ That day he took me in his arms,
And said, ‘ Sweet Edith, dearest,
In that life opening to thee now
Treasure these words thou hearest,
And always hold them in thy heart
Among thy very nearest :

“ ‘ Don’t give or taste one drop of wine,
Don’t give it unto any ;
Pray God to keep thy spirit clean,
And be a friend to many ;
Teach poor weak man wine holds a curse
Will make a wretch of any.’ ”

The quivering red lips hushed, the arms
Of fond love clasped her tightly,—
“ My Edith, love, ’twas wrong in me
To speak of this, not heeding thee,
And wake thy grief so lightly.

Don't sob so, child ; such thoughts as these
Are not for merry childhood.
Come, get thy cloak, we'll out and walk
Away to the frosty wildwood.
We'll gather the nuts, we'll gather the leaves ;
We'll see where the woodchuck's cabin heaves ;
We'll chase the squirrel who loves to steal
From Edith's stores his coveted meal ;
We'll track the fox who barked last night,
And gave my Edith so much delight.
Come, pet."

EDITH.

"Oh, papa ! let me tell.
Thee knows he loved me so,—so well."

MORRIS.

"Why, all love, Edith. Hush, forego ;
Don't sob so, child." But nestling low,
The curled head on his heart was pressing,
'The pent pain surged a full confessing.

EDITH.

"Oh, papa ! yes, please let me tell.
That night it rained he was so wild,
He called Maud Merrill Satan's child,

A beautiful fiend, and bade her tear
The serpent's coil that bound him there.
He said it wound him round and round,
 It was the serpent of the still;
And he screamed at the thunder's sound,
 And bade the lightning do its will.
Papa, it was so terrible.
I could not sleep, and mamma met me
Close by his door. She would not let me
Go speak to him; but next day, when
He grew so calm, I kissed him then,
And he told all these words to me.

“Papa, would God not love him then?
Wouldn't God love him when he was
So sick and sad? I'm sure He would;
For Jesus says that God is good.
He is so good, say, would He pain
 Any one, papa? Would He fling
Dear Uncle Alan from Him, just
 As if he was a wicked thing,
Into a fire that never dies,
And burns and burns?”

Her eager eyes,
Affrighted, gazed into his own,

And her voice sank until the ear
Scarce caught the trembling undertone.

MORRIS.

“Why, Edith, child, where didst thou hear
Such words as these? No, darling, no;
God loves us all; He would not cause
The vilest thing to suffer so.
Who scared thee, child, with these dark laws?
I thought so guarded was thy youth
That naught but clearest, simplest truth
Could meet thine ear. Yes, God is good;
Jesus well knew and understood
His great, grand love that gathers all.”

EDITH.

“Why did he talk so, papa, then?
He is their minister; they say
He’s a great preacher. Katie says
People do crowd to hear him preach,
And there is nobody can teach
As he does every Sabbath-day.”

MORRIS.

“Who is it, Edith? tell me, pray,
What hast thou heard, and when, and how?”

EDITH.

“ Papa, does thee remember now
When Maud was sick,—so sick and pale
After he died? We called one day;
Mamma felt best to drive that way
From meeting, some kind words to say;
And while we waited for her, then
Katie asked me to come and see
Her new wax doll, and I asked thee,
And we ran into Ethel’s room.
Their minister was there; indeed,
I could not help but hear him when
He spoke so stern, and I stood still
Till Katie drew me out again.
He said these words: ‘ God made some men,
From the beginning of the world,
Sinners who would do wrong; condemned,
In fires of wrath they would be hurled——’
Oh! I can’t bear to say the rest.”
The young cheek curdled with its pain.
“ Don’t tell it;” and the father prest
The fair child to his heart again.

EDITH.

“I cried, and Ethel came to me.
She said I was a queer child, too,
To notice things, and bade us go;
And Katie took me back to thee:
I did not care to see her doll,
Although it was so beautiful.”

MORRIS.

“Poor heart, thy happy hour was lost,
And his mind clouded in the thrall
Of deeper lines by darkness crossed.
But couldst thou feel such words were true?”

EDITH.

“Oh, papa! no. I always pray
When I think of them, and God takes
The ugly feeling all away;
When I ask Him, He always makes
A blessing round me while I play.
I did not tell it to any one;
It pained me, and I always know
I must not give another pain,
Nor let an unkind word remain

Which I would not take back again :
Mamma says Jesus tells us so.
I love Him, papa, for He says
Children should follow Him below."

Brightly the clear eyes answering gazed
Into his own, with sadness fraught.
He rose,—“ Here, Anna, take thy child,
For thine she is in word and thought."

“ For such the Saviour's fight was fought,"
Said Anna, smiling through her tears,—
“ With such His kingdom yet will own
But one far-reaching monotone,
The Christ revealed in love alone."

Out in the sunset shadows,
Where the gold glint glimmered and flushed
From the tall tree-tops to the crimsoning clouds,
And the low winds sobbed and hushed,—
Sobbed and hushed to a sleeping moan,—
Passed Morris Aubrey, oppressed, alone.
He heard not the wind, and he saw not the sky,
But he thought, “ Are these nearer to truth than I?
What is the faith these true hearts feel?
Is it born of the light? Is it human zeal?

Does the living love of the unseen press
Nearest to man in his nothingness?
Are the grandeur of reason, the power of brain,
But links in an intimate, dim-seen chain
To a something beyond? And what was He
Who taught in such grand humility
The crowds of listening Galilee?
To me He is brother and friend,—true guide.
What was He else? Was He more beside?"
Ah! once in a true heart's life must come
The question, the answer, that leads us home.

The moonlight lay on the meadow,
The bare trees, and the snow,
And the sparkle of stars in the upper sky
Were mirror'd in light below,
And the restful sleep of the beautiful night
Sank silently and slow.

Where the light drift lay in the hollows,
And the dark hill loomed on high,
And the hoar-frost wove its delicate work
'Neath the cold watch of the sky,
There were purity, peace,—a holy twain,—
In the stilled hour gathering nigh.

And Edith knelt by the window,
In the silentness all alone,
And she gazed long on the eloquent sky,
Each star familiar grown,
Till the quiet hush of the heart above
Sank gradual in her own.

For thought was busy with Edith,—
Child-thought so quick and bright,—
While the trembling chords of a definite love
Slow drifting from her sight
Came back with a strong and resolute will
To her trusting heart to-night,

And she prayed the prayer that Jesus taught
To the lone ones by His side,
And she prayed her own sweet prayer
For all she loved beside,
And, “Oh, God! bless Uncle Alan,
And forgive him when he died.”

Upon her cheek the tear-drop
In the moonlight glistened, shone ;
Say, was the young child suppliant there
In the moonlight all alone ?
Did an unseen power beside her bent,
Uphold and guide His own ?

Who saw the forms on Tabor's height,
When, weak with shrinking sorrow,
Unclosed before the Master's sight
That dark sin-burdened morrow?
The taunt, the pain, the cross, the gloom,
Of Calvary's fearful horror?

But eyes accustomed to unclothe
In childlike trust before Him,
With faith, which scoffed His human foes,
Yet knew the God-head o'er Him,
And saw revealed the prescient power
Whose strength alone upbore Him.

Oh! poor weak eyes, and weaker hearts,
So dull, and slow believing
Our birth-gift, as the Saviour did,
Like Him through faith achieving
The glorious soul-life's rightful dower
Which waits man's full receiving.

PART SECOND.

In the beautiful light of the soft spring sky,
When the sunbeam is here, and the shower is nigh ;
When the thrill of a beauty, warm, conscious, and still,
Reflects on our being, lies fresh on our will ;
When the air is afloat with a passionate weight,
As the song-bird re-echoes the call of its mate,
We pause, 'mid the richness of life, do we not ?
At the bound of our pulses, and question our thought.
Whence cometh this ripple of joy ? Is our mood
But the impulse astart from the sensuous blood ?
Do we walk in our animal fulness and pride,
Chance atoms evolving from chances allied ?
When the universe moved to the chime that was rung
At the birth-hour of time ; when the heavens were hung
In their wondrous completeness ; when matter and
mind,
In atomic progression, kind clinging to kind,
Moved on,—were we left, as a finished aside,
To the grand correlation of forces applied ?
Does science teach wisely ? Is mankind akin
With a life that is not life ? Nay, turn thee within,

O soul ! for thine answer : how grandly above
The pain of thy thought moves the confident love
Of the Christ-word inspoken,—“ One key still alone
Moves the hinges of Truth, to its grandeur upgrown ;
Then shall science my deep works unravel,—the key
Of the psalmist shall open thought, science, decree,
Until Light shall evangelize ; rest thou in me.”

Fair falls the spring-time beauty
O'er the favored land of Penn ;

Her mountain heights, her interludes
Of broad, bright valleys rolling on

Through cultured downs, by solitudes
Of wild, sweet grandeur, calmly thrown
Ever in curves whose lines express
The force of ruling gentleness,
Wake to the spring bird's call again.

No sullen peaks, untrod of men,
Lifting their ramparts, bleak and bare,
Defiant to the will and care

Of ages long, look out above
His glad Sylvania's trust of love.

Gentle her outlines, broad her wealth,

From nature's generous garner drawn ;
Her founder's prayer for peace and health
Moves o'er her sunset and her dawn.

Through all her breadth, the regal pride
Of Art, and Labor open wide
Her vast resources ; in her gift
The honest claims of will, and thrift,

And clear-eyed virtue stand supplied.
The pressure of an outward need
Builds industry's more noble creed.
The presence of rewarding power ;

The conscious freedom of the soul
To speak, to act, to guide the hour

As thought, and truth may bid it roll :
Whilst clang of hammer, and of steel
Ring outward with a stirring peal,
And flash of forge, and shuddering blast
From the dark mines deep caverns cast,
And the quick shuttles hum and clank
From inland rill or river's bank,
Each in their skilled enlightenment
Drink of the quiet blessing blent
In the mild Quaker's firm intent,
Who moulded statesmen, law, and thought
By the grand light his precepts taught.

And fair o'er Chester's broad expanse,
As drop her quiet homesteads down
On many a graceful slope, the glance
Of sunflash falls on fields of brown,

Wherein the green of later hours
Is redolent of life and flowers ;
And all the iridescent hues
Her rich kaleidoscope reveals,
Are cinctured by a graciousness
Where peace enfolds with gentlest stress
The all that from her spirit steals.
Fair Chester holding firm the name
That Pierson spake in Upland town,
What time the glad Proprietor,
In manhood's early prime, looked down
Entranced, upon the noble bay,
The lovely river rolling on,
While far, and bold, the woodlands' play
From Tinicum to Elkland lay.
With scarce a measured rood, that day
Trod here the red man, friend, and friend,
With the mild Miquon, time could lend
No shadow o'er his soul's high power
To lessen truth ; the holy hour
Which crowned the compact grandly done
'Neath the broad elm of Kensington
Has thrown a glory high, and true
As ever burst on minds of men,
When equal rights, a birthright due,
Weighed in a love, a justice new,
Rose o'er the world by deed of Penn.

In the gray light of the dawning,
When the stars grow pale o'erhead,
When the silent night retreating
Bears away each dark repeating
Of world-wide scenes of dread,
Then, with rich health upward bounding,
Springs the farmer from his bed.

Deep the sleep of pleasant dreamland,
With a conscience all at rest,
Whilst the morning's gift of blessing
On his pillow lightly prest,
Gentle peace and sweet contentment
Yield to him their calm behest.

Rough the dress the morning brings him,
Brown the hand, but clear the eye
Which, with first glance looking southward,
Scans the weather, reads the sky,
With a philosophic balance
Weighing nature's augury.

Then to duty, where the great barn
Sends its summonings to please,
As the cattle, snuffing outward,
Herald spring upon the breeze,

And the doves with dallient cooing,
In orchestral cadence wooing,
Flutter nigh, and rest at ease.

Now from tenant homes anear them
Come the farm-hands gathering round ;
Stalwart forms and honest faces
Drop in posts familiar found :
Strong Erin with her humor shrewd,
Poor Afric, patient, skilled, subdued,
In meek dependence bound.

How quails the heart, and quail it must,
'Neath the dread thought that God is just ;
That through His calm, unvarying laws,
Still Retribution follows cause !
Oh ! dark-browed race, the lines are cast,
The past has told her story ;
The present veils a clouded brow
Before the future's glory.

What eye, with prophet skill, the page
May read which shadows o'er us ?
Who sees far down the coming age
The bold events before us ?

Shall the grand principles of truth,
Irradiate with eternal youth,
Control its gladdened chorus?

If well our nation's honor weighs
True right divinely sifted,
From our free shores may bravely pass
A people nobly gifted
To flaunt again the ægis bold
Which ancient Egypt lifted,—
Egypt, whose sealed mysteries,
To the far world strangely shrouded,
Wait in their savage grandeur dumb
For these in cultured strength to come,
With clear eyes all unclouded,
To move where Afric's teeming wealth
Asks but the grace, the trained health
Of brain and nerve, to build anew
The wondrous promise of her youth,
To join with glad acclaim the world-wide march of
truth.

Then to her Sphinx's riddle true,—
Her Sphinx in thought-embodied might
Imperishably watching all,
As battling ages round her flew

With time, and death, and man, and art,
With mad Ambition's ghastly crew,
With martyred myriads' loathing heart,
Whilst buried cycles black'ning threw
Their very memories apart,
Lost, lost in retributive night ;
Yet holding still her ghostly thrall,
She counts, and seals, and waiteth long,
Till, passed the oppressor's power of ill,
Till, passed the long, dark night of wrong,
The new light of that advent song
Shall fill the accomplished time, and thrill
The hollow hope of dumb despair,
As thrills the past's deep sob, with the free hymns'
glad prolong.

For in that low command which ever
Has haunting filled the ear of man,
Rippling with an undying quiver
Her jungles lone, her silent river,
A low, sad moan which lulleth never,
"Let the oppressed go free," we scan
The hope within the untutored plan
Which set the Sphinx's watch ; we meet
The heart-groan to be free.

And true
To that instinctive throb which set
The unsolved wonder gazing down
The indescribable abyss
Of countless time,—while 'neath her feet
Lie buried cities of renown,
Waiting, as she waits, calmly through
The long, long roll of years, to hear
That whisper swell with deep'ning stress,—
The thrill of Mercy on the air,
“They come; the risen Christ is here;
The Sphinx's riddle's solved, earth bears alone to
bless.”

Read we our work, O patriot heart!
Calm moving in the later light,
To urge adown the coming years
The blessed rule of Right;
For lo! the powers of olden wrong
Are marshalling for the fight
Which palsies 'mid our nation's youth
The force of independent truth,
And like the mesh Epeira winds
Around her victims, seeks to bind,
And back to cringing darkness roll
The glad, free upspring of the soul.

Give we to hungering hearts the light
Eternal goodness means for all,
As human progress gathers might,
And thought assumes its fuller height
With life's enlarging hope, and call.
Onward the bidden Good must tread,
The myths of error dropping by,
Strewing their stubborn Hydra dead
As pebbles by the shores, where dread
And dark their sullen shadows lie,
Leaving untouched the spirit-grace
God stamped on this down-trodden race,
When lonely cane-brake, wild morass,
Felt His uplifting presence pass,
And inborn faith, with eyelids dim,
Looked up unfalteringly to Him.
May Afric lose it never !

Trace we the thought whose promptings kind
Stirred Morris Aubrey's generous mind,
As to their several tasks assigned
His workmen to their duties passed ;
And Lamar lingering behind,
Smiled to the smile so freely cast.
A small, slight man, with crippled knee,

Whose face, in ebon blackness bound,
Was radiant with that nature found
Of such dark skin and honesty.
A waif outcast from slavery,
What time the railroad underground
Throughout our shuddering country wound
Its midnight posts, a lonely boy,
With look that humble suffering gives,
Sat with the hunted fugitives.
A kind friend marked his fevered pain,
And asked the sick child might remain.
So where our Kennett hills drop down
In easy culture, broad and free,
To meet the slopes of Brandywine,
And our meek friends move silently
Through works of good, a kindly hand
Led him to comprehend the grand
And blessed boon of liberty.
A pupil in our Quaker schools,
The equal rights unconscious thrown
From childhood's heart, oft builds a life
To highest attributes, alone
A loving reverence rendered he
His boyhood's friends. "Lamar, for thee,
See that the ploughing goes aright,—
That hill-field should be done by night ;

And see that Patrick by the woods
Sets that fence true. I go away,
For this is Quarterly meeting day
Thou knowest, and weighty matters may
Detain us late. Thy work will be
As usual, holding guardedly
A watchful care as seemeth best ;
Thy judgment will supply the rest."

* * * * *

Up in the morning early,
As the red tint fades from the sky,
And the sweet breath born of the dawning
Floats through the casement nigh,
While the wild birds toss their matinée
In musical reply,
Sprang Edith, roused from her slumbers light
By the glad strains sweeping by.

She drank the joy of the morning,
She drank of its life, and its love,
And the warmth of a heart that is led aright
Turns trustfully ever above,
For the first rich thrill of thought should be
To God a gift of love.

And Edith knelt by the window,
In the dim, sweet morning air,

Telling the weight that her young heart felt
In her daily secret prayer,
While the pleading tones of her childish love
Sank low on the stillness there.

How little we know of the questioning thought
That fills a young child's brain,
As it ponders a phrase its ear has caught
Over and over again !
It will tell a thing with gladness fraught,
Yet seldom tells its pain.

Somewhere on her ear had fallen,
Somewhere carelessly given,
"The drunkard shall never inherit,"
Never, "the kingdom of heaven."

And she breathed the prayer that Jesus taught
His own at eventide,
And she breathed her own sweet prayer
For those she loved beside,—
And, "Oh, God ! bless Uncle Alan,
And forgive him when he died."

The shout of her little brother
At length comes up the stair,

And the softened call of her mother
Of, "Edith, awake, prepare;
Come play with the baby, darling,
While I see to the morning's care."

* * * * *

The dew-drop's glow on the lawn below
Twinkled, and paled, and shone,
As the breakfast-bell, with its summoning swell,
Rang out a resolute tone,
Swayed well by boyish hands, who gaze
With awe at its lofty throne.
At the farmer's board by the stroke of six
Must the workmen's meal be done.

The herds are fed, the oxen yoked,
And patiently stand "at hay;"
The sheep, with a bound to the grassy field,
From the fold have fled away,
And careful hands have well performed
The needs of the opening day.

* * * * *

A pleasant place is the farmer's board,
With the rich, ripe gifts of the summer stored,
When woman's thought, and her guiding hand,
Sees well to the means at her command,

Throwing a delicate care, and skill,
O'er the crowding comforts which rise at her will
 From fruited bough, and freighted soil ;
And the charm the eastern Sibyl knew
When the plenteous feast uprose to view
 (Though the golden springs told naught of toil),
Is one her hand may bring anew.

With gentle thought, and quiet smile,
 Paused Anna Aubrey there,
Observant that each one around
 Received a generous share.
How nature stamps with sovereign grace
 The lady everywhere !

Her hand,—it was not such an hand
 As fashion's rôle requires,
Whose delicate, ethereal mould
 The moonlight ode inspires,—
Though small and fair, yet knew it well
 To work out life's desires.

The well-set head, whose pose betrayed
 Almost a pride unspoken,
Gave to her look a dignity
 Of conscious power the token ;

The life-long rule of self-control
Had all to calmness broken.

Had other hopes, and other scenes
Allured the country maiden,—
That gayer life the world unfolds,
With dance, and music laden ;
She might perchance have owned the charms,
Of Thespis or of Haydn.

For in the finely-moulded lips
A something still was lurking,
Which hinted, rather than expressed,
The warm, impulsive working
Of feelings, which to dare the whole
Scarce bore the semblance of control.

Yet in the dark eyes' calm repose,
The wavy hair's smooth dressing,
Spoke all that mild, collective grace
We meet in the sweet Quaker face,
Whose bonnet, plainly pressing,
Folds inward, Truth's controlling light,
Outward, the world's seductive might.

The span await ; no spot or stain
Must soil the cosy carriage
In which our quiet-minded friends
Go forth as duty recommends,
From meetings grave, to marriage ;
And gathering without delay
Comes now the usual bright display
On "Western Quarterly meeting day."

A halo which must aye endure
Floats round the mandate, "Be thou pure ;"
Pure, that thine inward life may be
At one with God's sweet harmony ;
Pure in the outward, that another,
Whose doubting faith falls wearily,
May find, in looking on a brother,
The higher law revealed in thee,
The glory of the Christian name
Unshadowed by a cringing shame.

* * * * *

The fields have won a shade of green,
And, pale and few, the flowers
Peep out by roadside and by hedge,
Or, crannied by a rocky ledge,
Where southward sweeps the woodland's edge,
Await the May-time hours ;

While budding leaf, and tassel fling,
An odor of the early spring,
A breath of faintest blossoming,
 From the low spice-sprouting bowers ;
And the ripple of waters gliding fleet,
 With a musical tinkle comes the while,
 As the winding roads for many a mile
Echo the tread of the horses' feet,
 And kind love speaks in the quiet smile,
As distant friends sedately greet.

A pleasant love of olden lore
 Aye lives within us, and we trace
The first steps of the pioneer
 With grateful, acquiescent grace,
While in their Father-life we read
 Mute deeds which speak a noble race.

So with those grave-browed, earnest men
 Who came with Penn across the sea,
To plant with such effective will
 The seeds of Truth, for mankind free,
Who tilled the soil so deep with prayer
 That ever their work must hallowed be.

True to their memories comes a sense
Which bids us, gentle Love, to lay
Upon thy shrine a holier gift
Than meets the casual glance to-day ;
For faith had worked to perfect love
Supreme for good in such as they.

And from thy quiet heights, O Grove !
We glance o'er cultured field and wood,
And trace the time when William Penn
With gathered Friends devoutly stood,
Selecting fitting sites to rear
Truth's simple word in quietude.
And by the humble Meeting-fane
The School-house rose twin force for good.

Far down thy valley's line we trace
Where he with David grave, his friend,
Ate of their humble meal ; the shade
Of the grand trees might haply lend
A fitting Sabbath rest as these
Drew in the great Life beautiful,
The great, wide, changeless love, which never knoweth
end,
While through his mind prophetic swelled
That vision which his future held.

For clear in faith's full horoscope
He saw his glad Sylvania rise,
Meek Mercy crowning all her Truth
With holiest justice, while her skies
Smiled to the freeman's free-will gift
The sweet heart-hymn, "Love, love to God
And man be truest sacrifice."

Firm on their rock—the "Light within"—
They stood, these workers, friend and friend,
And built far up the stream of time
The noblest truth,—it hath no end;
The force the Quaker drew to earth
Moulds man and law, and still must lend
The outward sure advance, a growthfulness sublime.

And now, oh grave-browed sires, we stand
Where you stood, in the glorious day
Of human progress; shall we come
Our gifts in high-born hope to lay,
Enshrined in prayer as true to life,
As close to God as yours away?
Oh, beating hearts! bend low; He lists the while
we pray.

In the quiet Quaker meeting,
Sitting silently, and calm,
While the soft, low breeze, 'mid the shading trees,
Whispers a faint, sweet psalm,
So soft, and low that the spirit athirst
Heareth, and drinketh its balm.

From open doors the freshening air
Steals hushed, and listless through,
Chasing the fires still lingering there,
While, calm as Ophrah's dew,
Sinks down within the honored walls
The silence fitly due.

Out-door, the voice of singing-bird
Unrolls a listening pleasure,
While the hush, and hum, of the bee's low thrum,
Seeking her waxen treasure,
All speak of the joy surrounding life
In nature's stintless measure.

Within, with mild, collected face,
And hands in meekness folded,
While downcast eyes, and reverent grace
Feel "God is in His holy place,
Be ye devoutly moulded,"

Sit maid and matron, sire and son,
Before the great all-seeing One !

How deeply falls the silence,
The calm, submissive silence,
The hushed, deep, waiting silence,
Of the Quaker meeting-house !

Above, along the galleries' line,
On either side the centre,
The elders of our Israel sit,
Observing as they enter
The younger members, who should walk
Gravely, with no unseemly talk,
Lest Friend's unsteadiness should mock
The testimonies lent her.

On benches, cushioned, plain, and neat,
The large, wide building filling,
The middle-aged, and younger meet,—
Youth has its gallery, fair, and sweet
Are those, who, mildly willing,
Sit patiently, and wait the word
God giveth when His call is heard.

With sealéd lips, and tranquil air,
Centred in humble waiting there,
 Until the Life within arise.
At length from galleries' midst arose
A brother, on whose head the snows
 Of many winters rested well ;
And as he spoke the light grew in his eyes,
 And, gathering force, his words with clear, full
 meaning fell :

“ This world, my friends, is full of active thought ;
Creeds, theories, and forms usurp the place
Of simple Christian truth ; the will of man
So mystifies the faith that Jesus taught,—
So shrouds the spirit-glory of His words
With superstition, doubt, and weak debate,—
That darkness, as a sad and sure result,
Clouds up between our soul-life and our God.

“ Man is a reasoning being, yet a light
Of higher power is given,—a clearer word
 Is spoken to the soul ; and He who came
To evidence this truth has shown to us
 How close is God's near love in that He came.

“ For Jesus came a bearer of the Truth ;
He lived that truth in every act and hour,
And from His lips that truth, regnant with Life,
Fell with undying force. The touching love
Of His grand Being as a magnet draws
The soul within us to Him, reading there
In light revealed the perfect will of God.

“ And this Truth, what was this which Jesus came
To bear His witness to? Why did He lay
His young, pure life down at the will of man,
Rather than temporize or dim that truth?

“ To manifest the love of God, He met
In manly dignity, in spirit strength,
The cross, the shame, the death ; yet shrank from this,
And at the moment prayed the cup might pass.
The shadow of the birth-life floated down
Momently o’er His soul, then passed away ;
For in His grand humanity He was
Like as we are in flesh and blood,—a man.
The man of Nazareth was babe and boy.
In His pure mother’s arms, and by the grace
Of strict obedience to the voice of God,
The still, small voice within, He knew not sin,
And Jesus grew the Christ revealed to men.

“In this, His pure example, we behold
The mission of His life,—submission, faith
In God, and love to man ; in this the truth
He bore His witness to was sealed and set ;
In this His coming as the called of God,
The prophesied of ancients, was fulfilled ;
That union of the spirit, mind with God,
Which man obedient to His will may know,
Brings into being all that pure new life,
The Christ born in the soul, the true Divine.
And in His Life’s Obedience here we see
And recognize the power which saves from sin,
And reconciles us to the Father. Here
Is the atonement, in the yielding up
All self and self-will to the will of God.

“Throughout the reasoning world, there runs a
vein

Of thought, which names Him merely born of
man.

Here is a point wherein no human mind
Can teach another. God alone can give
The inspiration which unfolds its truth.
Spirit must open spirit ; reason fails,
Or, bound by her own struggles, blinds herself.

“Yet He personified the power of God,
And man beheld His works. But did He
claim

Ever that He was God? Nay, His grand aim
Was to redeem from outward law; to cleanse
The inward sacrifice; to draw away
From all externals—from Himself; to bring
Our whole life to a consciousness of power
Concentrate with the Father. Jesus came
Teaching a Truth so simple that the pride
Of earth rejects it: that upon the rock
Of God’s revealed will stands firm His church,
Whose beautiful accord makes all men free.”

Long fell his fluent words on ears
Whose rapt attention followed still
Point after point, explained at length,
In all the fervid warmth, and strength
Of calm conviction’s simple skill.
No bursts of florid eloquence,
No studied arts, whose vain pretence
May rouse the sense emotional,
But clear in conscious dignity
He led the listening thought to see
In Christ the Christ-power known in all.

Again the deep, hushed silence,
As, restful by the throne,
Our human hearts seem'd gathered
By a chorded love alone.
In quiet calmness, self-possessed,
A mother in our Israel now
Arose, her bonnet lightly pressed
Passed from her hand ; the even flow
Of gentle words fall on our ear
As, thankfully, we list the counsel falling clear :

“ When we go back, and read the records old
Of dealings which the Almighty held with man,
We learn God breathed in him the breath of Life,
And he became a living soul,—the plan
Of perfect wisdom here is fully laid.
This living soul was in communion with
Its heavenly parent, and it disobeyed,
And heard that close reproof 'mid Eden's shades,
'Adam, where art thou?' for 'Of all the trees
Thou mayest freely eat but this, the tree
Of the knowledge of good and evil.' Here we see,
When we presume of our own wills to learn
Of good and evil for ourselves, we earn
The condemnation which self-will must meet.
This is forbidden fruit, and Adam heard,

After he had transgressed, a voice which stirred
A terror in his soul. Never before
Had that reproof met him. We hear no voice
Of condemnation till we sin ; then the voice
That Adam heard we hear, its force we see.
If thou doest well, accepted thou shalt be ;
Do thou not well, sin lieth at the door,—
Not Adam's sin, but our own sin. The creed
Teaching original sin you will not find
In all the Bible, friends. His peace of mind
He lost through disobedience, just as we
Who scorn God's perfect laws to-day rebuked shall be.
Oh ! what instruction lies in this, my friends !

Let it be ours to listen and obey,
Growing in spiritual growth towards
The fulness of our God's appointed way.
As fruitful branches of His living vine,
Unto His laws in love let our whole lives incline."

A deeper strength grew in our hearts
As in her earnest words she laid
Her gift before us. Faith imparts
A blessing when its life is stayed,
And with the love that gives, communion sweet is
made.

Sank once again the silence.

Did the rush of unseen wings
Lowly, lowly o'er us bending,
Softening, nearing, upwards wending
With a musical unending,

Sweep the listening spirit's strings?
While the rapt prayer inly moving
Bathes within the eternal loving,
Bends beneath the fire of proving,
In the calm, hushed meeting-house?

Now one of younger years, whose face
And pure, sweet eyes expressed the love
That filled her life, with gentle grace
Arose, and took the word that strove
For utterance, and, warm and true,
She breathed the Christ-life that her spirit drank
anew:

"Art thou in health, my brother? My sister, art thou
clear?

Art thou in health before thy God, feeling His presence
near?

Do little hindering things of earth cumber thy pathway
here?

“ We stand before our Father’s eye, we feel His guiding hand ;

He gives us power His will to know, His wish to understand ;

With gentle love He leads us still to follow His command.

“ Oh ! looking on our secret hearts, what shall His eye unfold ?

Bring we our talents used and bright, bring we our burnished gold ;

Bring we the loving, loyal faith He seeketh as of old ?”

The sweet, clear, tremulous voice went on,

And we who sat beneath its power

Felt drawing round our inmost hearts

The spirit of the hour,

The sense of Life, the sense of Prayer,

The Master’s healing presence there.

A fair young head bent humbly down,

And vocal supplication rose,

Thanks giving to the God of light,

Entreaty that His word aright

May fill our hearts, and so enclose

Our fellow-man that peace renewed on earth,

Love, and good-will to all may bring the blest Christ birth.

An elder rose and said : " If Friends' minds now
Are well relieved, it would be seasonable
To close the shutters ;" and they slowly fall.
And either meeting, after a reasonable
And waiting pause, proceed in reading all
The queries and their answers.

" Th' state of the society" gravely comes :
" Friends are clear, in a good degree,
Of words detractive, unity prevails,
Yet it were well more guarded to be."

" Clear in the making or the sale we feel,
Of what intoxicates. Friends should be
Careful to guard our younger friends
From the dangers of evil company."

" Friends live within the bounds of their means
And are just in the payment of debts, and try
To rear in plainness of words and dress
Their younger members, accordingly
With the rules of Discipline, yet we own
To a great departure, and hope that Friends
Will bear in mind the Testimonies
Which truth requires to bless her ends."

So passes the business ; works of good,
 Calling for action, rise between ;
Aid for the oppressed Indian, aid
 For the Freedman, interest heart and scene,
While a grave and thoughtful dignity
 Rests ever on word and tone and mien.

Age gives her counsel, and youth her thought,
 A trembling voice oft meets the ear ;
The lip must speak when the spirit prompts,
 And the call of duty is close and clear.

Glides on the hour, and centres adown
 Once more the silence, hushed, subdued,
When the clerk's low voice in softened tone
 Gently announces "The meeting concludes."

PART THIRD.

ANNA.

“How beautiful the spring-time !
Life, I toss thy cares aside ;
Let nature’s glowing loveliness
Awhile my thoughts divide,
While the thrush’s song, and the plover’s call,—
Through the tremulous sweetness glide.

“To-morrow brings the queenly June,
To-day May bids good-by,
And Edith greets her first decade ;
Their merry laugh fills all the shade
As her comrades gather nigh.

“For me an hour of idlesse falls,—
I greet the spirit of nature well,
As sweet the scent of a thousand blooms
On the frolic south winds stoop, and swell.
While I listen, the rustle, the spring of earth,
Life calling to life, in its jubilant birth,
The annual hymn to the great unknown
From His glad recipients, breath and tone,

Tuned to the key that rapture wakes
Chording a sentient joy. Does it break
Through the long vibrations of countless space,
Till the delicate roll of its finished whole
Beyond our limits of sound, find place
With the beautiful pæan of Life redeemed?
Ah, Life! return with thy hidden love,
Till its affluent fulness will draw the heart
Of a unit world to its light above.
Then shall the understood Christ-word be,
As Jesus breathes its symphony,
The grand Cabala to all in thee.

“And life is joy, and the joy of life
So quivers, and enters in all we see,
As we fold the mammon of earth away,—
As we open our souls to the sunshine free,—
How can the will of the creature be
Other than one with its harmony?
How can the birthright of being be aught
Than an exquisite joy, O God! in thee?

“The delicate moss, the lichens gray,
The veined stone beneath my foot,
The tremor of gladness which fills the air,
The tingle of growth in bud and shoot,

The charm that the mute insensate holds,
Read we not in each touch, and tint, and line,—
How the Infinite Presence sublimés, and moulds
Its normal fitness, its wise design,
Its beautiful real, below and above?
Ah! ever the force of unchangeable love,
The near unseen, lies close, and clear,
An aura of blessing to all things thus.
What need of a fabled Pan to bear
An intermediate charm to us?

“But list, from the busy group I hear
A call for me; my fancy stays
Her flight as laughing eyes draw near.
How sweetly falls joy’s golden haze
On these young hearts! A glad surprise
To Edith and to all they plan.
Be mine to mould the loftier man,
That each life’s hidden truth shall know its strength
arise.”

* * * * *

Willie and Arthur, four and eight,
Held counsel sage by the entrance gate.
Along the drive, on either side,
Maple and pine the shadows divide;
Upwards a gentle smooth ascent
To the fair bright home of the Aubreys went,—

A pleasant home of the olden time,
With a varied beauty round it thrown,
As art, and taste, with skill refined
Studied with nature shade, and tone.
But Arthur, and Willie, eight, and four,
Pondered the question o'er and o'er.
"I'm 'fraid grandfather won't like it, Willie;
He'll say, 'Be discreet, boys, not silly';
But 'twould be real fun, too, though,
Thee to play Archie, and me to play Joe,
And be like troopers; and Flora she'd go,
She'd gallop to hear my horn just so,"

And a long, loud blast on a trumpet red
Woke a sharp response from robin o'erhead,
While the sound contagious, thrilling the vein,
Brought Willie's whistle from pocket again,
And a full according dissonance
Their musical merits to each enhance.

Sudden a pause,—“Why, Arthur, I—
I dess dranfater'll not mind it; I—
Dranmamma'll let us. I'm doin' to try.
I want my flag on Jack just like,
Like Lamar fixted the mules an' Smike,

An' Snap, when Drant was 'lected ; an' I——
Oh, yonner they come !” And the gate flew wide,
While at a quiet, leisurely walk
Came the mild object of their talk.

ARTHUR.

“ Please, grandfather, we want to ride.”

DAVID.

“ Well, boys, come round to the other side
And step in.”

WILLIE.

“ Why, dranfater, oh !

I'se a page,—I'se Archie,—and Arthur is Joe.
He's a trooper ; an' we want our flags way up high
On the horses, 'cause 'ts Edith's birthday, don't thee
know ?”

DAVID.

“ A trooper ? What means that ? A trooper ; so, so ;
And a page with white dress and blue ribbons,—oh, ho !
The birthday,—oh, yes, we all know that. But why
Must the birthday have flags, little Willie ? Draw nigh,
And step into the carriage.”

ARTHUR.

“ Grandfather, we mean
'Cause we're all playing fairies, and Nellie is queen,
And we have to bring thee a-riding.”

DAVID.

“ Well, well.

But the fairies ride broom-sticks, so I have heard tell ;
And what of that, Arthur ? ”

WILLIE.

“ Why, dranfater, why,

We is play-fairies, all of us, an’ Arthur an’ I.

I’s e a page ; an’ Lamar says that is the way

We must all be so nice, ’cause it’s Edith’s birthday ;

An’ we wants our flags up there, ’cause Arthur is Joe,

An’ Dreneral Washinton he rided so ;

In my new book I’ll show thee it. Now, don’t thee
know ?

Please, drammamma.” Out with a quiet smile

She had looked on the eager eyes ; the while

Thoughts of her own brave boy came back

On the paining links of memory’s track,

While the sad, low throbs of her heart confess

The battle of the Wilderness,

Where, bending o’er with pitying glance

The horror-laden ambulance,

With skill to heal, with hand to save

His honored country’s wounded brave,

His bright young manhood met a grave.

Ah ! strong hearts bowed, while true men died.
She threw the quivering pain aside,
And mildly to the call replied.

ESTHER.

“The horses are quiet, the distance is short ;
David, some duty in childish sport
Is with them ; they are so in earnest, and they
Are boys. Might they not in their whimsical play
Be indulged ?” With a quiet “so, so,”
David answers, “Well, well, I suppose so. I know
Small profit such play hath. However, well, boys,
Put them in as you wish.” With an eager up-poise,
The mimic flags twine in the mane, and the fold
Of the stars, and the stripes to the wind is unrolled.

Over the bridge, where the bright waters leaping
Low trammel the ear with the mists of its rune ;
Under the boughs, where the dense shadows sleeping
Are rich with the glad notes the song-birds intune ;
O’er the low grass where the dews of the night
Still rival the prism in changes of light,
Moves the slow, steady team, with the boyish outburst
Of the fresh hearts, with answer, and question athirst.

With smile surprised, the grandsires now
Hear the bright trumpet's sudden glee,
While frolic forms in laughing mirth
Spring up from path, and shrubbery,
And round them close, and bear them on
With mimic force, where brightly shone
Their tryst beneath the tulip-tree.

“Sit down, grandfather, sit down,” they cry ;
“And sit, grandmamma, with Edith nigh.
See, we have woven our bower of state,
And ye will preside? Dearest parents, we wait
On your word. We are fairies,—we come and go ;
We are elfs from the weird land, and waifs from the
wild ;
We are mystical Undines, sun-lift piled,
And our Aphrodites from the waters below
Are the greenest of sea-nymphs ; just see them ; and, oh !
Say but the word, and our genii shall spring
From the earth-mists, the wealth of our wonders to
bring.”

Smilingly, lovingly, Esther down,
As the merry prattle around them rose,
Stooped, kissing the rosebud lips of those,
And smoothing the locks on each glossy crown ;

But a look of almost stern distress
Lay on the grandsire's quietness.

"Anna," he said, "these children of thine
I fear too much to the world incline;
From these pernicious books they read
Must rise the growth of evil seed.
Not this the way thy fathers walked,
Nor knewest thou this idle talk;
Each new departure from old ways
Brings weakness on these later days."

"Dear father," whispers her low, calm voice,
"Let us drop in the children's mood to-day;
The harvest shall bid us all rejoice,
For our seed in the furrows of love we'll lay,
And the warmth that lifts the germ must garner the
fruitage-day.

"Too heavily down on our childhood's heart
Oft falleth the weight of our riper years;
We have robed our youth as the brides of Christ,
Oft with rejoicing, yet oft with tears;
Let us bide His will, for the Lord will call
His own when His time in time appears.

“Sow we our seed in prayer, and faith,
Knowing the Father will guide, and hear,
Whilst we watch, and prune, as the spirit saith,
Away from envy, deceit, and fear,
Shall not the unseen Love smile down
On the innocent gladness which meets Him here?”

“And, David,” with her quiet smile
Spake Esther, “’tis unusual, dear,
That thou and I should thus be set ;
Yet let us not with silver hair
The gladness of our youth forget,
Nor lose that He of Nazareth
With gaze of interest looked upon
The children of the market-place,
Whose piping songs, and dancing pace,
No censure from His spirit won.
Like His, our work may be to start
A wiser thought in some young heart.

“Here, Nellie, take my bonnet, dear,
And smooth my cap with fingers light,
And, Alice, closer draw my shawl ;
How thankful to the Lord of all
For life, for love, this morning bright

We should be ! My beloveds, be still,
A few brief moments seek His will."

Obedient sank each light form prone
On the soft grass ; right well they knew
Grandmamma's habit ; her sweet tone
With talismanic power drew
Ever each young heart nigh her. Now
A deep hush sealed each lip and brow.

'Twas a fair scene ; in green enfold,
Its emerald all alit with gold,
Away the broken country rolled.
Warm in its sunbright radiance, far
Sloped hill and valley, interchanging
With darker woodland belts the rare
Soft tints of early spring ; and there
From freshened furrows rose the maize,
Plume-like, to greet the sun's broad gaze,
And grain-fields sweet in freshness bent,
The light breeze o'er them rippling, ranging ;
The kine upon the sloping hills ;
The waters in their rapid flow ;
The pleasant farm-homes, cool and still ;
Look out upon the morning glow
In all the calm of sweet content.

Nearer around them, dim and deep,
The cool, continuous shadows sweep,
Where through the pines the breeze was swaying,
While tall trees watched their leaflets playing,
And the squirrel poised on his branch to throw
A curious gaze on the group below.
Around the stately tulip-tree,

Whose smooth, firm bole ascended clear
Some threescore feet above, there wound

A dainty rustic seat, and here
The glad young artists had essayed
A graceful canopy to rear.

With knotted columns ivy-twined,

And roof of grape-vines interlaced,
Draped with the delicate ferns of spring

In quaint designs, all deftly traced,
Whose weird-like symbols, and mystic rings,
Inlaid with floral blossomings,
A hidden imagery enshrined

To young eyes deep in storied lore,
With whom the sieve on the open sea
Contained as truthful a mystery

As famed Aladdin's wonderful wiles,
And the sudden rise of the palace of smiles,
With its magical richness welling o'er,
Was as true as the truth of the Koh-i-noor.

And as each with gift, and moss-wreath laden,
A band of cousins, merry, and free,
Had come in the morning's open hour
To build for the birthday *fête* a bower,
As a first surprise to the little maiden—
They had heightened their work's solemnity
By many a bit of brave romance
Culled from historic times, and chance;
And many a page, for childish wonder
Was thrown to the wee ones gazing under;
Whilst apt citations of spell and faery
Were woven with glee in the fabric airy,
As the clear-eyed talkers, laughing, ran
From First-day school to Ghengis Khan,
Till their all was wrapt in its mystery.

Now hushed in silent reverence sat
The waiting group, the two-year wean
Nestling in loving confidence
In the warm fold of sweet sixteen,
While tall young lads with frank, clear eyes,
Noted with quiet heed the grandsire's look serene.

A large grave man, whose face expressed,
In lines from inward conflict caught,

That mild resolve, whose conscious rest
Is born of pain, and holiest thought,
A look of settled peace, which says,
 “The goal is near, the fight is fought.”
With air of simple dignity,
As one who having borne the toil
Of life, had conquered, and would fain
Shield others from the same assail.

As silently he sate, the while
Communing with the inward word,
The kindly heart relaxed its hold
On sterner thought, and in him stirred
The in-word, “They who work in faith
Shall find in *me* their work preferred.”

Around him circled, hand in hand,
The childish forms; an eager light
Lay in each eye, as fearing much
Their glad play might not fall aright,
And in each young heart's hope he read
A dread, dim-shadowing delight.

He spoke,—“Well, children, be it so;
Be fairies if your play so choose,
If but each young heart holds aright
The first love in its morning dew.

Sit nearer, Edith, may this sport
A wholesome influence diffuse.
We wait these fairy messengers.
Is that right, Nellie?"

“Father, thanks ;
I knew thy love could not refuse
Or sadden these unwonted pranks,”
Laughed Anna, as a glad acclaim
Rose grateful from the childish ranks,
Who circle round them, hand in hand,
While Alice takes the speaker’s stand.

“Oh, list to the Fairies’ greeting,
To the Fays in the woodlands meeting,
As we gather from homes afar.
Lo! we come from the Orient’s sweetness,
Where the pearl, and the opal glows ;
We bring Nevada’s treasures ;
And Denver’s wealth disclose ;
Where the lights of the nordlands glimmer
We have brought of its simple truth ;
Where the Indian oceans shimmer
We have gathered the warmth of youth ;
With the delicate gifts of our far renown
We come the birthday queen to crown.

“We have treasures of hidden knowledge,
We have books of wondrous might,
Which throw on the human spirit a charm
Of measureless delight ;
With the witching grace of the weirdland,
Bend we thus to the haunts of man,
For the force of our magical power
Has been since time began.
Receive in its weight what the fairies unfold,
Great is their power to give and to hold.”

A smothered laugh from the gleeful throng
Somewhat the speaker's words prolong,
As a look of half-amused surprise
Lay in the grandsire's thoughtful eyes,
And quietly taking their playful strain,
His measured words respond again:

DAVID.

“Bring, then, from those hidden treasures,
From this wealth of far renown,
The gifts I ask. Her innocence
Seal ye with Virtue's clearest sense,
Which lives in truth alone,
That ever, as dross beneath her feet,
Earth's false delights may fall, nor meet
To mar her life's high tone.”

A merry whisper through them passed,
When, with a roguish pleasure,
A box of bonbons, quickly planned,
Was placed by Cousin Abner's hand
Beneath her slipper's measure.

The brown eyes lifted. "Grandfather,
I'll share my share to-morrow
With poor lame Harry by the mill ;
He is sick, and they have sorrow."
The smile that lit each radiant face
New sweetness seemed to borrow.

While Nellie's words demurely drest :
"Obedient to thy wise behest,
Thus fill the Fays thy first request."

He smiled. "Now bring her Knowledge,
That the spirit of worldly pride
May bend, subdued, as a broad, clear light,
In her soul is sanctified.
Seal her child-heart to the beautiful True,
Knowing the right, with a love to do,
And her joy shall be multiplied."

Again the whispered council passed,
And "Books, our books," was the low reply ;
And tripping feet with sudden glide,
Dropping their gifts by Edith's side,
Flitted with rapid movement by.

While gravely Nellie's clear voice rings,
"See, we have gathered from many a spring
Of delicate knowledge this offering ;
Name yet another our power to try."

DAVID.

"Bring, then, with firmest strength, the force
That Temperance gives the heart,
So that self, with grasping, covetous will,
Shall find in her no part ;
For the world will lure to its evil ways.
Crown ye the joy of moderate days,
Refined, and free from art."

Moments of rapid thought assumed
A long-drawn tension, ere the look
In Nellie's laughing eyes resumed
Its wonted clearness ; then she shook
Her light curls with a sudden toss,
As quick resolve her purpose took.

They chose a spray of smilax frail,
With strawberry blooms, and lilies pale,
And over her shoulders round, and fair,
Lifting the wealth of her ringlets rare,
They laid the delicate wreath at rest,
With a sprig of broom on the tender breast.

Parted the group expectant round,
As radiant Nellie answer found,—
“Humble worth in self-denial,
Purity in days of trial,
Lofty aims all truth allied,
See the pledge in this supplied.”

Smiling, the grandsire met the smile
Which beamed observant round the while.

Then, gravely, “Seal her nature now
With Patience, rich with light,
Gentle and restful. Though her path
Lead on through clouds of night,
Let faith in the Christ her love renew,
And as God is one, she shall know Him true,
As she seeks to obey aright.”

A wee bright girl, whose chubby hands
Could scarce her offering hold in lure,
Came forward, and in Edith's lap,
With soft-blue ribbon leash secure,
Laid now her gift, a snow-white dove,—
Giver and given meek and pure.

NELLIE.

“See Love and Patience in life-long thrall
Meet in this gift, wee Mary's all.”

The fair child nestled by Edith's side,
A smile of sympathy each to each
Flashed out; there was no need of speech
O'er the priceless pledge, so love allied.
The silent compact each gazer bound,
While a restful quietness sank around.
It passed.

“Now crown a higher grace
In ‘Godliness of Soul.’
When the young heart, taught by the voice of truth,
Grows strong 'neath its control,
Reading that good is meant for all;
Free, when the Prince of Peace shall call
His great work on to roll.”

Alice, and Philip, cousins twain,
Place now at wondering Edith's feet
A group, where shrank a flying slave,
And three tall forms with brows replete
With holy sense of right, looked on
As half to life uprisen, resolved her cause be won.

NELLIE.

“See, kindles 'neath the sculptor's moulding
Love of right in each beholding.

Oh! grandly, and free, as the sweep of the sea
Quickens the heart 'neath arts unfolding;
Emblems of an high endeavor,
Filling life, forever, ever,
With a purpose undismayed,
Thus the seal we set is laid.”

Quietly rested the grandsire now,
As he noted the thought on each upturned brow,
Then gently spoke, reflective, slow,—

“With these should come a fuller joy,
As Brotherly love conveys
In its calm, and holy confidence,
The zest of restful days,

So open her trained thought, and seal
Her anchored faith, where faith may kneel
As it hymns its maker's praise."

The watchful thought in Nellie's eye
Flashed into light as she made reply,—

"We read thy riddle, we see, we see
That 'The seventh and last will be Charity ;'
The 'cardinal virtues' crowned must be.
Up, fairies ! up from your haunts ! behold !
Neither with gems, nor yet with gold,
Nor the wealth of the sea
Shall the earth-rites be,
Nor the coral trinkets, so deft, and bold.
Oh ! the crooning wail
Of our midnight sail
Must sink to a murmur low, and dree.

"Up, with fingers apt and fleet,
Up, with quick, and noiseless feet,
Weave ye, with choicest skill, the crown
Which gracefully down
On a brow as pure as a martyr's sigh
When the end is nigh,
And as fair as the snow-spray reeling on
Upon ocean's lift when the storm has flown,

“Soft let it rest,
With a blessing prest
From lips we honor,
Whose touch upon her
For life a memory blest will be.

“Twine ye ivy for love’s own winning,
Bouvardia for life’s pure beginning ;
When its cross hath neither a shade or blot,
To sully the sweeter charity,
Our daisies brotherly love shall be.
And the silken cord without and within,
Close in front with the amethyst pin,
Draped in a sweet forget-me-not.

“Now, king of our *fête*,” cried joyous Nellie,—
And her dimpled cheek to a warmer flush
Glowed in the joy of her triumph blush,—
“See, the Fairies’ work is over ;
Yet we linger, yet we hover
Round her till the crowning blessing,
Till thy touch, august, and ready,
Till thy will, defined, and steady,
Looking far through the portal
Dim, shading, the mortal,
Leads, guides the immortal
To purer possessing.

“Hushed and awaiting, our gift we proffer,
Meet symbols of earth-life, thus we offer.”

A touch almost of awe arose

With Nellie's words, unconsciously
To her bright self; around her, those
Whose years mature could smile to see

The roll of childish pleasantry,
Stirred to the thought that all on earth
Is destined, through the gentler birth
Of good within, to give abroad
A conscious unity, accord
With the heart's reverent “Love to God;”
That childhood's play, maturer thought,
The aims of life, all, grandly brought
Through simplest lift of prayer, before
The unseen eye, takes fuller scope
As peace unmeasured springs to meet the call of Hope.

There's a spirit presence that dwelleth in man,
And it bideth in him through time, and tide;
Over the dial of passing events
Its shadow, unseen, is felt to glide.
The crafty plotters of wrong may build
Their works of evil, and deem they hold,

'Neath an outward hush, and a studied smile,
The knowledge of all they weave, and mould ;
But come in the path of him, whose soul
In the light of truth hath lived alway,
And the spirit presence which bideth in him
Will read that wrong as the light of day,
While its shadow falls with a dim unrest
On the soul of him who hath gone astray.

Oh for the confidence fuller, clearer,
Oh for the faith to feel, to know
That the light within in the souls of men
Is the same to-day, the same as when
It spoke to man in the Eden of then,
In the Eden of innocence long ago,
When the twilight hush on the thought was lying,
And the longings of earth were fainting, dying,
Drooping away from the judgments within,
When the still small voice to the spirit ear
Rang as a summons distinct and clear,
While the step of the Lord seemed gliding near,
And the sinner bent low 'neath the weight of his sin.
Oh for the confidence pure and true,
Which, folding this wealth of the past aside,
Comes with a strength ever given anew
To gather our manna at morn's clear tide,

Our manna which falleth fresh, white as then,
And is more to our world's great life to-day
Than aught that floats from the misty gray
Of the beautiful, saddened past, to lay
A leaden weight on the hearts of men.

Gravely the grandsire rose ; his form
Massive, and tall, yet scarcely bent
With weight of passing years, whose flight
Through eighty summers backward sent
Their deep-grooved memories' varied light.
A farmer's life of action, health,
The hush of quiet hours, the wealth
Of home's best joys, all, haply lent
Firmness to nerve, to mind content.
Lifting the broad-brimmed hat which pressed
His scant white locks, he stood at rest.

Beside him, with a purpose warm
With love's own thoughtfulness, imprest
To lift the hands which else perchance
Might drooping fail, rose Esther, best
Beloved by all. That love confest
Lay on her brow, and when she smiled
Her warm, sweet charity, beguiled

The troubled heart to peace. A glow
Of merry interest lay beneath,
As these, the weavers of the wreath,
Stood, mutely wondering what new thought
Would to their puzzled minds be brought ;
For well they knew, while kind, and true,
A moral lesson would be taught.

Slow smiling, with a kindly grace,
He took the young child's hand, her face,
Rose-tinted with expectant wonder,
Turned to her comrades gay, as under
The dainty wreath which Esther's hand
Received, and held, she waits command.

DAVID.

“The king who giveth word, and power,
Is ever nigh, to Him we turn,
Asking that on this play-wrought hour
May fall that grace our lives may learn :
And, learned in happy childhood, much
Of pain goes from you, and distress
Knowing Him friend,—I ask for you
To love Him more, and lose Him less.
And I would on your minds impress
These deep truths, opened us by Paul,

Which his clear wisdom would express

As seven virtues, building all

The structure of a noble life,

Leading that life to perfectness.

Virtue, the unspoiled human heart ;

Knowledge, to know all right as good ;

Temperance, to quench undue desires ;

Patience, love truly understood ;

And Godliness, as squaring all

Our lives should live, in truth, and faith ;

And calm Fraternal love, which strikes

A chord in all the spirit saith ;—

Heed well these steps which lead you free

To the high Christ-gift, Charity.

“I would my sons, and daughters bright,

With all their learned lore, and light,

So different from the even flow

Of young life sixty years ago,—

When in our pioneering strife

We little knew of cultured life,—

Would cling to one thing dear to me

That guarded sweet simplicity,

In which the truth makes all things free.

And now we crown our birthday queen

With honors—may their fruit be seen.”

As Esther, smiling, stooped, and laid
The fragile wreath so gayly made
Upon her brow,—“I ask for thee
The grandeur of humility ;
May God’s dear blessing on thee fall,
And with His blessing crown you all !”

Stooping, the tall man raised the child,
And folded her with warm caress ;
But Esther spied the starting tear,
Telling of more than words express,
And smiled, and spoke right cheerily,
While all the thronging urchins vie
Greeting the lady of the fête
In glad, confusing joy elate,
And turning then, all voices meet,
Giving the grandsire promise sweet.

Said Alice, “Be I nymph or fairy,
Grandfather, I will ne’er be airy ;
But in my life must twine the good
Of honest Quaker womanhood.”
Cried sturdy boys, “Doubt not, our work
Disdains alike to fear, or skirk ;
With sobered judgment, honest men,
We’ll cast our lot with Fox, and Penn.”

Laughed Nellie, "Ere I don the bonnet,
Dear parents, let me write my sonnet,

And skip, and play, while glide away
Whatever doubts may rest upon it ;—
Then in my soberest armor drest,
I'll join the ranks, and aid the rest,
Each with your own pure lives imprest.
Think not our childish meeting play,

Perched silent on the school-room benches,
Our preaching with a grave display
What dear Lucretia's love might say,
Remembered from the last First day

(With sundry doubts and sundry wrenches),
Will ever, ever, pass away.

We'll bear our noble leaders up,

And sift Macaulay's keen researches,—
And show the Christ-word lifts a man

With royal right o'er human lurches,
While tempered is our work, with thought
Of you, from whom our light is caught."

And the spirit-presence with loving power
Restingly lay on the morning hour.

PART FOURTH.

THE waning June, with each sweet refrain,—
The light mist fringing the alders low,
The trill of the Hyla lengthened, slow,
On the moist air boding the coming rain ;
The resolute peal of the Bufo's cry,
As she cheeringly springs from covert nigh,
And wends her way to the tryst again ;—
And the night-hawk's lonely cry, the dash
Of his sudden plunge to the meadow below :
While traileth the fire-flies' luminous flash
Till the dark woods sparkle with tinsel glow ;
While the whippoorwill's song, so glad, and far,
From the tangled copse where the deep glooms are,
Ringeth away on the hush of the night—
The old familiar sounds of the night,
Telling anew the renewed delight,
As the dewy hours drop down to meet
The stir, and glow of the harvest heat.

Wakes there a chord of joy that we miss
From the perfect whole of a June day's bliss,
When the heart hath garnered no undue care?
Oh! to lie in the outer air
On the velvety green by the new-mown hay,
Watching the cloud-folds, gathering play
With the reaper's rattle just faint away,—
Alone, in the luscious month of June,
When the dark leaves sway in an anthem alway,
While the shadows lie hushed on the noon,
And the old oak tells, to the poplar bells
What the whispered spells intune,
While the luminous air grows rich and rare,
With the weight of the mystic rune.

Ah! the tale they whisper hath notes as strange
As the Peris' wings, who mount, and range
Away to the dim empyrean blue;
The honey-bee lurks on the wild-rose stem,
Rifling the sweets of its diadem,
While the purpling shadows fall dimly through,
She listens, and bears the story from them,
And the leaf, and the tree, are telling to me
The song of the beautiful mystery,—
The song that filleth creation's plan,
Only unheard by the senses of man,—

The honey-bee drops to the clover-bloom,
Foldeth her wing, just for a minute,
Close to mine ear, and whispers within it
The self-same song ; but the sweet perfume
And the human senses, ever astart,
Drown all but the key-note down in my heart,—
Can we, will we ever attain
To read the wondrous, slumbrous strain,
Floating through nature's rapt domain ?

With a chirrup that startles, so close, so loud,
The cricket glides from his hall of state ;
Just under the stone where the shadows wait,
And the gray rock's lift, bends slopingly down,
He keepeth his palace, the burnished brown
Of his coat I see where the Orchis heaves
In its upward growth the sere dry leaves,

Their tessellate arches around him crowd.
What nameless quest, what unsung foray,
Lures thee abroad, blithe woodland rover ?
Too luscious the air for the dim repose

Of thy curtained room, when the scent of the clover
Weighs faintly around, and the odors meet
Of the myriad blossoms that crowd at my feet,
And round thy rock's rude pedestal greet ?

There every fissure gives root, and place,
To the delicate ferns' unfolding grace ;
And never did wild brier toss away
From upland rift a daintier spray ;
And never did richer moss than here
Its courts, and towers, and grooves uprear,
With its crimsoned bud, a regal gem
As a glory crowning its slender stem ;
And never did lichens curl and cluster
With lovelier tints and livelier lustre
Than grace thy rocky haunt.

Above,

The wood-robin's song, the song we love,
Thrilleth, and filleth the heart, and the grove,
Tender, and mellow, and liquidly clear,
Its exquisite dignity rests on the ear.
Oh ! bird of the forest, thou bringest to me
The pain that saddens a memory
For she whose spirit so drank thy tone,
Whose sweet voice rivalled thine own, thine own,
As with eye, and ear, enrapt, attent,
Through all her being thy melody went,
As she, answering, gave thee note for note,
While through thy wild haunts, lone, and wary,
With Bonnie Doon, and Highland Mary,
Her untaught songs would gladly float.

Thy song o'er the woodlands is swelling, and breaking,
She sleepeth the sleep that knows not waking,
And the world falls dreary.

Gather the cloud-folds ; rolling dun
The massive blocks pile into one ;
Down their dark nucleus in the west
As yet the muttering thunders rest ;
But their signal has flown through the air, and the earth,
And a shadow of dread, in the warning has birth.
Light wings cleave the sultry air,
Hurriedly to covert flying,
Huddle the sheep for the shepherd care,
And the young lambs plead with a plaintive crying ;
From pastures deep, the grazing herds
Snuff the changed air, slow homeward tending ;
With fallen crest, bold chanticleer,
Regardless of his harem near,
To shelter cautiously is wending ;
With wild, clear cry, and stately air,
The slow geese leave the water's flow ;
From upland fields the jubilant ducks
With ceaseless call, and answer go :
They scent the promise of coming cheer,
When the rain shall splash, and the floods appear ;

While mindful of all the little duties,
The cares that round her pathway lie,
The farmer's wife "seeth well to her household,"
As the storm-cloud's centre is rolling nigh.

With quickened step, and ready will,
The workmen test their farming skill
In gathering the hay;
The windrows rise in gradual length
As plies the raker, speed, and strength,
The fragrant heaps are tossed amain,
And lightly fill the loading wain,
While willing hands, and muscles strain
The shelter of the barn to gain,
Replacing in its measured train
The team that glides away;
The huge fork lifts the load in air
With sturdy sweeps, descending where
The ample mows receive, and bear
The harvest's rich display.
No time to cool the heated brow,
Or dally with remissness now,
And glad the shout, when, 'neath the mow
The last load stands, while near, and low
Growls the deep thunder's play.

Dark in its heavy front advancing,
Lit casual with the lightning's glancing,
While the quick'ning thunders shudder, and break,
On the hot, still air, in the rain-clouds' wake,
Sweeps on the gathering storm, anear
With ragged edges, shifting, changing,
Luridly dark, and restlessly ranging,
The low scud stoops, while the breath of the wind
Follows in rapid career behind.

Morris steps on the terrace and pauses to laugh.

MORRIS.

"Enthusiast, coming the tempest to quaff?"

ANNA.

"The poultry are folded, the dairy has gone,
Thy pensioners cared for, my duties are done.
See, Morris, the grandeur, the glories that rise
In the film of the cloud as it sweeps o'er the skies.
Come learn of its mission, all humble, and wise."

MORRIS.

"In the war of the elements readest thou then
A lesson that links with the logic of men?"

ANNA.

"There's a lesson in all things to him who will read,
 And the logic of life is its call, and the need.
 See, the gloom overspreads us, the strata above
 Lies in sunshine and azure, in light that we love ;
 But the cloud is upon us, the pores of the earth
 Like the pores of the soul need regenerate birth ;
 The lightnings of thought keenly flash through our life,
 But the thunders of passion bear down with their strife,
 Till the bolt, as conviction,—see yon as it falls
 On the woodlands before us,—our weak faith recalls,
 While the low falling rain, as it sinks on the plain,
 Like the smile of acceptance, brings gladness again ;
 So read we this lesson, in grateful accord,
 With this grandeur that moves in the might of the
 Lord."

MORRIS.

"Come, moralist, cease thee. Come, Anna, within ;
 There is danger abroad in the tempest's wild din."

ANNA.

"Is there ever a danger to those who have faith
 In the arm that encircles, the power which saith,
 'Ask ye in my name, and thy heart-wish shall be
 As thy truth is, accepted.' "

* * * * *

The storm has rolled to a distance,
The sun breaks through the cloud,
Once more the voice of the wood-bird
Joins the reveillé, full and loud,
Which fills the earth with a glad acclaim
Ere the vesper song is heard,
Ere night unrolls her shroud.

On the trees the sunbright welcome
A thousand lamps have lit,
Where the clear drops gather, and tremble, and fall,
As the rainbow glories flit
Through the bended arch, on the troubled east,
While the promise outpoured on all
Floats back in smiles to it.

With eyes of sparkling gladness,
With cheeks of roseate health,
Sprang Edith out with her brothers
To gather the day's last wealth,
To trace the floods, to ford the streams,
To aid in the shout of the others,
When the musk-rat's small eye gleams,
And they track his lair by stealth.

The rainfall lies on the meadows,
And sparkles the bending spray,
While the bare feet of the merry child
Dashes its beads away,
Just as a child's foot ever should
When reigneth Sirius mild
And the warm south breezes play.

The foot that bounds o'er the dewy lawn
In the roseate flush of morning,
Gathers a strength for the battle of life
Which is ever a mute adorning,
For the rose of health is a thing of joy,
Nathless disdains weak strife
Or pallid folly's scorning.

We hold too close the vapid rules
The world's whims bind together,
The golden rule builds statesmen true,
As youth bounds o'er the heather,
Drinking its life-breath, freedom, love,
Bursting forever new
In the study by the grove.

The sturdy gold of honest worth
Grows best, when nature guides it

Through ways untrammelled by the sins
Of luxury, which hides it
So deep in fashion's ruling lusts
That childhood's innocence must
Give way, when shod, and ruffled in
A mood that ill betides it.

The reign of a gentle common sense
Must come with ages nearer,
When Albert sat with England's queen,
Brighter it grew, and clearer,
While the world looked on, and smiled to note,
Through pathways all unseen,
Its life-food growing dearer.

We read of life at Balmoral,
And joyed to see the honor
Which nature in her holy truth
Had royally laid on her ;
The bright gem in Victoria's crown
Was living God's sweet youth
In the love truth which had won her.

Oh ! blessed gift of country life,
Thy purity and pleasure,
To seeing eyes, and thinking minds,
Are not in stinted measure.

We claim for childhood's hours of gold
The fresh, pure thought, by wood, and wold,
The scholars' lore for winter's chills,
The bare feet by the summer's rills,
The loveliness which gladness wills,
 Unheeding the refrain
To mould a model's treasure.

Rings Edith's musical laughter ;
 The joyous country child,
In the freedom born, in life's young morn,
 'Mid the myriad beauties wild
 Which feed her thought, with a purity caught,
In lines where God hath worn,
 The path for the unbeguiled.

Now fording the rush of the waters,
 Hand, in hand, they fearless go,
Now leaping the light embankment
 Where the mill-race falleth low ;
 Skimming the boat o'er the lakelet's breast ;
 Scaring the crane from the trout's sly nest ;
 Seeking through childhood's curious eyes,
With the happy aptness lent,
 All unknown things to know.

She stands alone by the water,
Her playmates far across,
With her apron rich in woodland trove,
Fresh buds, and freshened moss.
Shall she stem the force of its rude uproar?
Can she spring like a sea-bird light,
And land on the opposite shore?

The twilight drops around her,
The lights of home are bright,
The copse-wood which surround her
Grow dim with closing night;
The rabbit leaps from his covert nigh,
The squirrel sends down his sharp good-by;
Just glimmers the first faint star,
Reproachful upon her sight.

Irresolute for the moment,
When calmly on her ear
Her mother's voice falls gently,
And her counsel stilleth fear,—
“Commit thy ways unto the Lord,
And He will make for thee
Thy pathway ever clear.”

With a backward step and a sudden joy,
And an upward smile, she springeth ;
The lithe form gains the distant bank,
And her light laughter ringeth,—
“Mamma, there was so much to see :
The thrush’s nest is safe,
The old fox showed his brush to me,
And the partridge by the clump of corn
Of clear, white eggs has three.”

* * * * *

The harvest moons have waned, and gone,
Their flooded light its work has wrought ;
Stacked is the wheat, and groweth the corn,
The yellow stubble, so sere, and lorn,
A tint of livelier green has caught ;
From quiet coverts, daintily hid,
Comes up the cry of the katydid ;
A faint, and delicate tone, not yet
Full chorussed is the concert set
Which charms the later after-math ;
The cricket’s chirp is heard between :
He counteth his measure well, I ween,
In regular rhythm, shrill and low,
Like the timid touch of a school-boy’s bow.
The heat of the noonday lingers still
On the breeze that flutters adown the hill,

With the scent of the corn-fields borne away
From its generous growth and silken spray ;
The cooling rush of the waterfall
Suggests a pleasant repose to all,

As the mill-wheel's whirr drops down its stir,
While the night-buds bend in their dewy bath,
And the soft night whispers her quiet call.

The moon has gone, the stars alone
Look down from the lustrous sky ;
The arching dome looms upward from
The great wide world, so high,
Alas ! that it looketh on shame and wrong
In the night scenes moving by.

The angel-presence of life, and death
Moves patiently, and slow :
There falleth joy to the lot of some,
To some the bitter woe ;
The healing years alone can tell
To which the blessings flow.

God doeth all things well, and yet,
All seething in his sorrow,
Man holds impatient in his hand
The bud that blooms to-morrow ;

And joy upholds its glittering farce
Strength, from earth's strength, to borrow.

The stars look down, nor mist, nor frown,
Bear they to unstained gladness,
The pure heart drinks their draught with joy,
Or with a happy sadness ;
With what reproach they look on some,
Whose faith falls prostrate 'neath a gloom
Unread by misery's madness !

Ah ! pained eyes, that long for eyes
Whose sweetness meets them never,
Shut out, with pain, the flowers below,
Shut out the bright stars ever ;
The years that glide, and bring the years
Will build the faith, will dry the tears,
While the blessed Christ-hope reappears :
But the golden bowl is broken.
The cistern's wealth wells clear, and nigh,
The great Love pitying lingers by,
But never the stars look bright again,
Though the word of grace be spoken,
For earth is weighed ; the quivering bar
Which holds the holiest gate ajar
Reveals where the loved, and lost ones are,
And the heart accepts the token ;

But never the stars grow bright again,
Or the song-birds sing with the old refrain,
Or the sweet earth lulls the weary pain
 Which nestles amid the peace,
 The grand triumphant peace,
Which sweeps to the soul from the throne of God,
When the staff has burst from the living rod,
And the path which the loved, and the loving trod,
 Grows bright with the near release.

The curtains sway in the night breeze,
 Falling soft, and cool, and white,
As she sits in quiet musing,
 'Mid her chamber's shadowy light,
All thoughtfully sits Edith,
 Wrapt in dreamings of delight.

Born to the high endowment
 Of clear, and earnest thought,
Which yet, in childhood's plastic powers,
 Is but as an image caught
Fresh from an inward impulse thrown,
 Scarce by the thinker sought.

So weaves she webs of beauty
 From the fairy-land of dreams,

Tracing the mythical intercourse
Of what is, and what seems,
And closing with a clasp of pearls,
Where the real through it gleams.

Oh! childhood's thought, oh! childhood's heart,
With its instincts true, and tender,
Moulding the commonest views of life
With a rare poetic splendor,
Building the highest, holiest hopes
That hope may ever render.

How oft, through years mature, and stern,
The dazzle of your sweetness
Comes back to teach the unfilled life
Its weary incompleteness,
While the heart recalls your high designs,
And mourns your worth, and fleetness.

She traces the old child-story
Of "the eyrie, so lone, and gray:
The white clouds sat on the eagle's crest,
And the sun burned down alway,
And the eagle looked out for miles, and miles
O'er the valley of Chamouni.

“Up, up the great crags tower’d, and rose,
The pine’s root deep in the ground,
And the waters dash, and roll, and splash
At its base, with a talking sound.
Like the wind, when it comes, and breaks, and drops,
And its breath just quivers around.

“And the rocks,—the rocks are as feldspar white,—
They glitter like gems in the mine;
When the moon looks down, and lights their stars,—
I wonder if just such a shine
Lit up the cave where Sindbad piled
His diamonds, and rubies around him wild,
And his gold, so vast and fine?

“I would hear the cry of the hungry brood
As the eagle left her nest,
And spread her great, wide wings to fly,
With the sun-flame bright on her breast,
Away for miles, and miles, to seek
For the food they loved the best.

“I would see the hamlet rude, and low
Which down in the valley lay;
Oh! the father has gone to mind the sheep,
And the mother is far away,

And the dear little baby laughs aloud
To hear the children play.

“So good, and glad, with its bright, blue eyes,
As it sat, and laughed, and cooed,
While the cruel eagle flies on, and on,
And over it poised, and stood.—
Oh, my! they can do nothing but scream,
And that will do no good.

“I would hear the flap of the eagle’s wing,
And the baby’s sorrowful crying,
I would think of all its parents’ pain,
To the children’s pain replying,
While the cruel eagle sweeps on, and on,
To her eyrie homeward flying.

“I would launch my boat on the waters dark,—
I would not be afraid;
‘God loveth all who help the weak,
They shall not be dismayed;’
I would skim my boat to the foot of the crag,
And fasten it quick in the shade.

“And up the cliff I would mount, and climb,
I would climb it strong and fleetly,

I would hold by the roots, and step in the clefts,
Where the saxifrage blooms so sweetly.
Maybe a snake might coil, and squirm ;
Oh ! the baby's cries would make me firm,—
I would be strong completely.

“And up, and up the cliff, I would climb,
Where it stoops, there I would hide me :
I could slip my hand so quietly round,
I would pray, ‘Dear Father, guide me,’
I would draw the baby closer, close.”
Here, with a start, turns Edith.

Goes the imaged out, as the real brings
The true thoughts shamed endeavor.
“What makes me think such things?” she said ;
“I could not do so ever ;
I never was there. If I saw it all,
I could save the baby never.”

She turns to the window, breathing
The healthful real again ;
Like a hidden gleam of sunlight
Falling athwart a dream of pain,
Comes the quiet calm of the starlight rest
On the memories which remain.

The dippers are bright, and the pole-star's light
Falls clear on the mariner's course to-night ;
Jupiter drops from the zenith anigh,
Mars looks down with his fiery eye,
Orion lies far to the southern zone,
With the mists of the south-land 'neath him thrown,
Venus with radiance fills the west,
But Edith looks out on the hill-bound east ;
The map of the star-sky many a day
On Edith's memory thoughtful lay.

With a loving smile she lingers,
 Gazing far into the sky,
An indescribable beauty
 In its holiness seemed to lie,
And the pure, warm thought of the sinless child
 Lay soft in the clear brown eye.

And Edith knelt by the window,
 In the dim light all alone,—
She prayed the prayer that Jesus taught ;
 She prayed for her loved and own ;
Then her low, persistent prayer,
 Takes its sad, familiar tone.

The measureless depth of the spirit grace
 Filled the child heart's swelling tide,

As in tremulous strength her faith, and love,
With her human sorrow vied,—
“ Oh, God ! bless Uncle Alan,
And forgive him when he died.”

The sobbing heart of Edith
Lulls for a moment's space,
In her clasped hands, bending lowly,
She drops her tear-washed face,
A moment, and around her
Unfolds a wondrous grace.

A light, a conscious presence
Mild, and lustrous, fills the air ;
A voice sounds through her spirit's depths,
Distinct, and full, and clear,—
“ Do not ask it any more,
Accepted is thy prayer.”

Flashed the light, a conscious presence,
Mild, and lustrous on her sight ;
Spoke the voice, her being thrilling,
Thrilled the words, slow paled the light.
All startled, up sprang Edith
'Mid the lonesomeness of the night,
All startled, half a-tremble,
With its suddenness and might.

“What was it?” murmured Edith,
Looking inly on the scene,
With her parted lips quick breathing ;
“What did the brightness mean ?
What spoke the words ? what made the light ?
I heard the words, I saw the light.
What did, what does it mean ?”

A sense of strange amazement
Lay upon Edith's will,
The twilight dimness round her,
The night-hush sweet, and still,—
Through the awe that lay on every nerve
Joy sent a timid thrill.

Once more she turns to the star-sky,—
“There is no moon to-night ;
Maybe a shooting-star went by.
Could I have seen its light ?
Mine eyes were closed, I saw the light,
I heard the words ; with my shut eyes
I saw, and heard, the light, the words.
Did God speak to me ?” Oh, ye wise,
Read the child's mission right.

* * * * *

The years that glide, and bring the years,
Are rife with joy, are rife with fears ;
Men build in hope; and oft in tears

The structures built, decay.
What matter if through pain, and spoil
The gain which marks the end of toil,
All purified in its annoil,

Shall crown the slow-born day ?
Life ever wears a golden glint,
Fresh, freely poured from Mercy's mint,
Would we but see its rainbow tint

As glide the years away.

* * * * *

Edith Aubrey grows apace,
Fair in form, and fair in face,
But fairest of all, in spirit-grace.

Never a shadow seems to press
On her young being's comeliness,
To cloud a joy that all confess.

If aught about her claims the eye,
The quick gaze of the passer-by,
'Tis her unconscious purity.

The acquiescence in her dress,
From the plain Quaker's graver stress,
Avoids observance, nothing less.

In all that marks her you may see
The loftier simplicity,
Which, quietly, and grandly worn,
Holds no associates' views in scorn.

The life she leads hath quiet tone,
The scholar's studio open thrown,—
The rich abandon knowledge brings
In tracing nature's hidden springs,—
The gentle home-rule, coloring thought,
To its sweet grandliness hath brought
The mind-tone, all unseen, unsought.

And still, with trustful faith, she bends,
And breathes her prayer, sincere, and true,
Unquestioning whither it may tend,
Undoubting, if her thought be new ;
She meets the unseen Love at night,
She meets it with the morning dew.

But never did her heart again
From that one night, repeat that quest ;
Her prayer was answered, all her pain
Had yielded to a perfect rest.

She questioned not, her life received
The sunshine of a joy confest,
And when she knelt, the unformed words
In thanks ascended,—*he* was blest.

She never prayed for him again
Who led her young thought unto prayer :
Somehow she felt that God smiled down
Upon her work, and, rested there.
Though thoughts of Alan oft returned
His mem'ry brought nor pain, nor care.

And never did Edith's lips unfold
Her secret conflict ; it lay hid
Deep in the silence of her heart
For years unspoken, till one day
A strong man doubted God's near grace,
And as she, wondering, paused a space,
All unreservedly it slid
From her full soul, and nestling lay
So eloquent her truth amid,
That shame blushed on the doubter's face,
And he went thoughtfully away.

THE END.



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